

## GOLDING'S RHETORIC IN *DARKNESS VISIBLE*

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### ABSTRACT

The art of William Golding is to invest apparently natural objects and events with enriching imagery which imply a new dimension of meaning. The language builds up the narrative of the text. His art is to invest apparently natural objects and events with enriching imagery which imply a new dimension of meaning. *Darkness Visible* is a unique creation of William Golding. The novel is primarily a study of evil. Golding's language is extraordinary for its ornamental value, vividness and impact. The figures of speech such as similes, metaphors, personifications used in *Darkness Visible* elucidate vividly the character and atmosphere.

**KEYWORDS:** Antithesis, Metaphor, Personification, Rhetorical Question, Simile, Symbol

### INTRODUCTION

The language and style of Golding's novels has often been praised for its intensity, and poetic qualities. His genius lies precisely in his ability to portray abstract moral and metaphysical themes in sensuous and seemingly everyday language. His art is to invest apparently natural objects and events with enriching imagery which imply a new dimension of meaning. His language is generally plain and functional, with a straight forward English that will be as intelligible to an educated adolescent as to a sophisticated adult. His language unites symbols and reality in as effective way as in any modern English novel. The language and imagery serve the archetypal elements of his novels.

The novel *Darkness Visible* is primarily a study of evil as it traces the career of Matty, a child mutilated in London blitz and suffering psychological damage, and that of Sophy, a child deserted by her mother and an amoral psychopath. It is also a map of our perception of the universe in terms of the spiritual and material. Golding has adopted the grotesque as the structural principle for *Darkness Visible* along with a number of Biblical and classical metaphors and powerful symbols. The novel is like a dramatized form of Revelation with the confused and blighted Matty serving as the voice of the prophet. All the above take part building up of theme and narrating characters, atmosphere and points of view in the novel. The language of *Darkness Visible* is also very uncommon. The language used here is greatly ornamental too. The story related to Matty, Sophy and Sim and the transition of nature of people and land are narrated with the help of many literary terms such as simile, personification, metaphor, and rhetorical questions.

### SIMILE

The similes used in *Darkness Visible* are very fantastic. The uses of similes make the language of Golding's novel very rich and realistic. Some similes throwing light on characters and their actions and states are as follows:

"He could become unnoticeable like an animal". (p.22)

"They held on to each other, laughing like apes". (p.24)

"Matty's good side shone upwards like the sun". (p.31)

"He was aware first of a shining thing like a curtain". (p.44)

*“Matty’s cry stirred the birds awake like a false dawn, and in the silence after they had settled again he understood the roundness of the earth and the terror of things hung in emptiness, the sun moving the witch way, the moon on its head... (p.56).*

*“Matty, who must have thought himself invisible like an ostrich if he did not look at any body, was called before the manager and in the process of being given his cards when the door opened and the owner of the factory rolled in “. (p.58)*

*“They set him seeing water in flashes and this got mocked into the mirrors in Mr. Hanrahan’s room and his own lips out there felt like two ridges of rock in a wasteland”, (p.63)*

*“Matty wanted like an animal not being able now, to do anything else”. (p.64)*

*“He would kneel and build his tower out of match boxes; and sometimes, now, he would blow at them like an Abo blowing on the pebbles and they would all fall down”. (p.69)*

*“Matty looked at him, mouth shut like a trap”. (p.71)*

*“They forgot a rather nasty confrontation between Mr. Pedigree and some ladies who saw him threading his diffident way between the prams that were parked outside like boats moored at a landing stage”. (p.84)*

*“She appeared to have come out of the room across the landing like the other two as if that bedroom produced aunties like butterflies in warm weather”. (p.114-15)*

*“Sophy stood for a while, then undressed slowly and remembered the fullness, the clearing out of want and urgency like the full of a great arch; and it was easier to give the credit for it not to Roland at all but to nameless masculinity” (p.150)*

*“Dear God he’s sweating like the Sunday roast”. (p.158)*

*“The word acted like a pulled trigger on Sim”. (p.200)*

*“The over coat shut in front of him like drawn curtains”. (p.201)*

*“She looked like an archangel laughing so my mouth shouted no matter what I could do”. (p.237)*

*“Then all at once because she had let go of her mind and become the Sophy – child again in her py t in the centre of the moony room, fear descended over her like a magician’s tall hat and froze her flesh so that she cried out in panic”. (p.132)*

*“The man dragged him like a sack into the office and pushed him under the table”. (p.24)*

The novel *Darkness Visible* also projects sights of nature. Those beautify the narrative of the novel. The different nature related descriptions are presented through the use of similes as follows:

*“Tricks of construction might muffle the sound of the bells themselves, and a jar would hiss over the customer’s head like a bird of prey, turn a corner and vanish in some quite unexpected direction”. (p.39)*

*“On one side you could look right down the hill – and there was the factory, looking like an architect’s model of itself”. (p.58)*

*"It stopped where scrubby thorns fledged a soil that looked rather like sand and where the only break in the prickly horizon was the low hump of three trees, not all together, but spaced all along on the north hand and seeming distant". (p.61)*

*"Clouds and bright sun succeeded each other, like takes in a film, across the rounded greenesses and indigo horizon". (p.161)*

*"The grey light washed through Sophy like a tide". (p.181)*

*"There was sound like a rabbit thumping that came from that cupboard, that loo right up in front". (p.251)*

Apart from the above, the novel is built up with various situations and themes. Those are represented through the similes used in the following sentences:

*"The quotation was of course, a primitive curse, the physical expression of which had been concealed in the transition like smiting hip and thigh and a dozen other savageries". (p.37)*

*"All this book a great deal of time but was full of interest and enjoyment like playing with model trains" (p.39)*

*"This lived and watched without any feelings at all and brandished or manipulated the Sophy – creature like a complicated doll". (p.24)*

*"The gold grew fierce and burned, Sebastian watched in terror as the man before him was consumed, melted, vanished like a guy in bonfire: and the face was no longer two-tone but gold as the fire and stern and everywhere there was a sense of the peacock eyes of great feathers and the smile round the lips was loving and terrible". (p.265)*

## PERSONIFICATION

In comparison to *Rites of Passage* the use of personification is very negligible in *Darkness Visible*. There are limited uses of personification in the novel where some inanimate objects are attributed with human qualities. It seems as if they are human beings. An example is cited below:

*"Silence lives there, Sim. Silence is there and waiting for us, waiting for him". (p.223)*

*There are strong overtones of the underworld, both classical and biblical, particularly as where the incident happens is described as a place where "even at noon the sun could pierce through to the water" (p.72)*

Sophy, the dark haired twin, is later explicitly identified with the Whore of Babylon in Revelation (p.236) and embodies the temptation of the flesh which Matty must learn to see as a satanic device to divert him from his mission. In the Apocalypse, this strange personification is generally assumed to represent Rome.

And the purpose of the writer of Revelations in introducing her was to suggest that Satan, after the dragon had been defeated by the archangel Michael, had turned his attention to the earth encourage the Roman Empire to seduce the early Church from virtue.

Throughout the book, good has become more and more personified in Matty and evil in Sophy.

## METAPHOR

The use of metaphor is absolutely limited in *Darkness Visible*. It indicates the point of similarity or resemblance between two essentially different things indirectly. The point of similarity is suggestive and speculative. The examples of the use of metaphor as cited below throw light on characters:

*"...Matty saw himself half a dozen times, pulled out sideways and squashed down from above; and Mr. Hanrahan was the shape of a sofa". (p.59)*

*"She was a card, Daisy, a pink, six-inch hells, cheap trouser-suit, dead white face, dead black eye make-up, straw hair like a rick, plastered down on one side and sticking straight up on the other". (p.157)*

*"She's as brave as a lion really, you see, but she has this thing about germs. Not Viruses. Just germs". (p.225)*

The title of the novel itself is a powerful metaphor and oxymoron. *Darkness Visible* is an optimistic novel, suggesting in its final resolution at least the possibility of escape from a world dominated by atomic bombs, cultural shocks and the tyranny of words.

## SYMBOL

Fire and water play an important role in the novel. Matty is 'born' from the fires of Blitz and willingly dies in fire. He undergoes a third immolation in which his spiritual face is healed:

*"the man..... was consumed, melted, vanished like a guy in a bonfire; the face was no longer two tone but gold as the fire." (p.265)*

*"Water is symbol of Matty's repentance for his 'sin' against Pedigree as he performs his own mystical baptism in a lake or creek in Australia.(p.75)*

Matty regards the elements of fire and water in a spiritual and creative light.

For Sophy they are destructive and in keeping with the entropic universe portrayed in the second section of the novel. Fire is an element with which to perpetrate "outrage". Water is destructive:

*Sophy kills a dabchick on a stream and learns through this act the law of "Of course"(p.108) in which her will can mesh in with the universe so that it assists her in achieving her ends."1*

## ANTITHESIS

In *Darkness Visible* there are only a few instances of the use of antithesis. The two clauses opposite in meaning throw light on characters. A few examples are cited below:

*"It made him very angry all over again but pleased her". (p.137)*

*"He convulsed but made no sound". (p.71)*

*"With a kind of automatic libidinosity he reached out at her but she swung a carrier bag in the way". (p.151)*

*"She tried to get him to stop by the public convenience at the top but he would not". (p.106)*

## RHETORICAL QUESTION

The use of rhetorical question is observed in *Darkness Visible* to some extent. As it was in earlier novel, such

questions are asked by character either to themselves or to other, but answers to those are not made. Those are used to put points more fruitfully. Moreover, rhetorical questions in the present novel too play a great role in highlighting characters, theme, situations and artistry. A few examples may be taken into consideration. The two sisters Toni and Sophy are together. Sophy does not know why Toni is unexpectedly excited and frightened. Different questions come in the mind of Sophy about Toni's such state. That is indicated by following rhetorical questions:

*"What happened? Is he angry? Were they doing that? Like in the lectures? Toni! Why did you say I need you? Did you hear them? Did you hear him? Daddy? What did he say?" (p.128)*

In the course of the conversation between Gerry and Sophy, the former praises the latter. The rhetorical questions below indicate it:

*"You're doing what? Sorry, I can't hear you, it's this line – you're doing what? You're developing what? You're developing your deltoids? Oh Super darling, where are they? Can I help?" (p.175)*

Sim Goodchild as a business man does not feel absolutely successful. He is earning money. But whatever he earns is not sufficient according to him. That is indicated by the following rhetorical questions:

*"What to do? How bring in the pakis? How the Blacks? What brilliant and unique stroke of the antiquarian book seller's craft would praise that crowd of white people away from the telling and bring them to read old books again? How to persuade people of the essential beauty, loveliness, humanity even, of a beautifully bound book?" (p.193)*

In the course of the conversation between Sim and Edwin, the former makes a judgment of latter's nature. In response to it Edwin makes a clarification. That is indicated by the following rhetorical questions:

*"How did he know I am a seeker? Where is it written on me? On my forehead like a caste mark? Are there tribal cuts on my cheeks?" (p.201)*

*"Whereas Rites of Passage delighted in language, Darkness Visible calls language itself in question. Above all where Rites depended on artful juxtaposition of scenes and pictures, it is only a continuous process of deeper and deeper exploration that can hope to make darkness finally visible, beyond paradox and different points of view, through some sequence of focusing."*<sup>2</sup> The different figures of speeches employed in the novel highlight theme, atmosphere, characters, situations, and artistry of Golding's *Darkness Visible*. Moreover, those are adding to the beauty of the language of the novel.

\*All textual references of the novel *Darkness Visible* are from Faber paperbacks edition, England, 1980

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